

MYSTIC RIVER WATERSHED



2006: D 2007: D 2008: C- 2009: C-

REPORT CARD

Each year, EPA New England issues a report card for the Mystic River Watershed based on sampling data from the previous year. The grade is determined after comparing bacterial water quality data at the 15 MyRWA baseline monitoring points throughout the watershed to state swimming and boating water quality standards.



Mystic River

WATERSHED INITIATIVE

Working together to improve water quality, public access and recreation throughout the watershed.



WHAT IS THE INITIATIVE?

The Mystic River Watershed Initiative is a collaborative effort with the goal to improve water quality and environmental conditions as well as create and protect open space and public access to the Mystic River and its tributaries through safe public pathways and access points. The Initiative is guided by a steering committee composed of 22 organizations including not-for-profit community groups, local, state, and federal governmental agencies.

Accomplishments to Date

- In April 2008, EPA New England held a Mystic River Watershed Summit that focused on Flooding, Industrial Contaminants, Bacteria and Stormwater, and Reconnecting people to the river. The summit was attended by over 150 people.
- EPA New England has loaned over \$5,000 worth of monitoring equipment to the Mystic River Watershed Association in support of baseline and hot spot monitoring programs.
- EPA enforcement efforts have stopped over 10,000 gallons per day of sewage from being discharged to the watershed through illicit connections.
- The Steering Committee has formed two subcommittees, and is in the process of forming a third, to focus on more specific issues. There are currently science and municipal subcommittees. These subcommittees have held widely attended meetings and plan to support the Steering Committee's efforts in any way possible. A business subcommittee is in the early stages of formation.
- Massachusetts Environmental Trust awarded a total of \$508,500 to five projects to improve public access to the Lower Mystic River through creating, expanding or enhancing opportunities for biking, hiking, walking, non-motorized boating, picnicking and other riverfront outdoor public recreation in the Lower Mystic River Watershed. The grants are made possible by the purchase of specialty environmental license plate fees, for which fund the Massachusetts Environmental Trust.

HISTORY

In 2006, EPA began working with Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection and the Mystic River Watershed Association on monitoring and compliance activities and EPA New England launched the first annual Mystic River Watershed report card in 2007. In 2008 EPA New England held a Summit on the watershed and launched a broader Initiative. In early 2009, the Mystic River Watershed Steering Committee was created to allow environmental advocates, state and federal regulators, and business and municipal leaders to work collaboratively to promote actions that will improve environmental conditions throughout the watershed.

The goal of this collaborative effort is to help restore and protect water quality and wildlife habitat, increase open space and public access to and sustainable recreational use of the river and its tributaries. The group plans to support these goals by collaborating on activities that improve water quality, increase the level of environmental compliance, and raise public awareness, understanding and access to information about the Mystic River Watershed. Lastly, EPA New England and the Steering Committee plan to address overarching environmental justice concerns within the watershed.

WHY THE MYSTIC WATERSHED?

The Mystic River Watershed is a collection of rivers, streams, lakes, and ponds that drain an area of approximately 76 sq. miles and encompasses 21 municipalities north of Boston. The Mystic River proper, which flows from the Mystic Lakes in Winchester and Arlington through Medford, Somerville, Everett, Charlestown and Chelsea to Boston Harbor, is one of the great urban rivers of New England. The river and the watershed that feeds it, served as an epicenter of much of the activity from which sprung settlement and economic activity in the colonies: mills, shipyards, and villages.

Unfortunately, settlement and industrial activity have not always been kind to the watershed. As the towns and cities in the watershed developed, fields were replaced with parking lots, footpaths with highways, and pastoral river banks with polluting industrial activity and shipyards with oil storage facilities. All of these alterations have contributed to the decline of the watershed and water quality in the Mystic River. In addition, the lower segments of the Mystic River and its tributaries lie in a densely populated, highly urbanized industrial area where citizens are challenged by significant environmental, social, and economic concerns.

HOW CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

New England's Mystic River Watershed Initiative Web site provides background information on the watershed, a list of important contacts, updates of events and activities, and an invitation to become part of the solution. To learn more about Mystic River Watershed Initiative, visit: www.epa.gov/region1/mysticriver.

This Initiative is a watershed-wide effort. A watershed is the total land area and water bodies that drain into a single river or lake system, and/or is the source of groundwater recharge to that river or lake system. By focusing on the watershed as a single entity, our approach capitalizes on collaboration between up- and down-stream stakeholders. While priorities can vary throughout the watershed, by working together, Steering Committee members are able to combine resources to address shared issues.

HOW CAN I HELP?

- Don't litter;
- Participate in clean-ups and other river events in your community;
- Pick up after your dog;
- Don't feed waterfowl;
- Don't dump oil, wash water, or other household wastes into storm drains;
- Use rain barrels to capture and reuse water and/or consider planting a rain garden to naturally collect and absorb rainwater;
- Minimize the use of pesticides and fertilizers on your lawn;
- Encourage the development and implementation of your community's stormwater management program (see www.epa.gov/region1/npdes/stormwater);
- Report illicit discharges or connections to local and state officials;
- Volunteer to monitor the water in your area by contacting the Mystic River Watershed Association at www.mysticriver.org;
- And, share your knowledge with others!

WHO IS CURRENTLY INVOLVED?

The Steering Committee is comprised of 22 organizations — not-for-profit community groups, local, state, and federal governmental agencies.

- Alternatives for Community and Environment, Roxbury, MA
- Charlestown Waterfront Coalition, Charlestown, MA
- Chelsea Collaborative, Chelsea, MA
- City of Chelsea and Town of Winchester representing all 21 municipalities
- Conservation Law Foundation
- Friends of the Alewife Reservation, Arlington/Cambridge, MA
- Friends of the Middlesex Fells, Medford/Winchester/Melrose, MA
- Friends of Upper Mystic Lake, Winchester/Medford, MA
- Groundwork Somerville, Somerville, MA
- La Comunidad, Inc., Everett, MA
- Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation
- Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection
- Massachusetts Department of Public Health
- Massachusetts Department of Transportation
- Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
- Massachusetts Port Authority
- Massachusetts Water Resources Authority
- Metropolitan Area Planning Council
- Mystic River Watershed Association
- Neighborhood Of Affordable Housing, East Boston, MA
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- Woburn Residents' Environmental Network, Woburn, MA

Resources

For more information about the Initiative visit our Web site: www.epa.gov/region1/mysticriver

EPA Contact

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